# WHAT ITALY HAS DONE FOR THE WAR

Italy's Military Effort compared
to her Demographic and Economic Potentiality

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# What Italy has done for the war

## Italy's military effort compared to her demographic and economic potentiality

### 1. — The consequences of emigration.

The large streams of Italian emigration have diffused the preconception abroad that the Peninsula enjoys a superabundance of population such as to render her capable of a military effort more intense than she has so far sustained. This preconception is mistaken.

The emigrational phenomenon is due in Italy to the scarceness of natural resources apt to favour the growth of large industries and to the want of capital. It is therefore *a cause of depopulation rather than the effect of the contrary;* it takes away from the country many male adults who, having for the most

part definitely transplanted abroad the centres of their interests, have lost contact with the mother country, are not within the orbit of her powers of coercion and are *with difficulty in a position of being able to reply to her call in the hour of need.* During the very first months of the war, in July, August, September and October 1915, a considerable number of repatriated persons (about 25.000 a month) were registered; but at once after these months the number descended to 2000 or 3000, that is to say *5 or 6 times less than in normal times.*

According to data furnished by the Royal Emigration Commission, the number of individuals of whom Italy has been deprived by emigration during the last years preceding the war is as follows:

| YEAR | EMIGRATION IN EUROPE | TRANS-OCEANIC EMIGRATION | TOTAL EMIGRATION | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Absolute number of emigrants. | Absolute number of emigrants. | Absolute number of emigrants. | Emigrants per 100,000 inhabitants. |
| 1911 | 271.065 | 262.779 | 533.844 | 1539 |
| 1912 | 308.140 | 403.306 | 711.446 | 2031 |
| 1913 | 313.032 | 559.566 | 872.598 | 2464 |

TOTAL NUMBER OF ITALIANS
NOT IN THE KINGDOM (before 1914).

| | |
|---|---|
| Europe . . . . . | 910.823 |
| Africa. . . . . | 176.676 |
| Asia. . . . . | 12.245 |
| Oceania . . . . . | 7.294 |
| America. . . . . | 4.698.343 |
| Total | 5.805.381 |

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
WHO WERE TEMPORARILY ABROAD (1911).

| | |
|---|---|
| Europe . . . . . | 380.346 |
| America. . . . . | 681.327 |
| Other countries . . . | 62.330 |
| Total | 1.124.003 |

Here we have *7 million Italians absent from their country* in the hour of the great ordeal. The value of these figlures will result more manifest when we remember that of 100 emigrants (before 1914) about 81.5 were males and 89.5 individuals economically active, aged from 15 years upwards. This shows that the quantity of the proportion mentioned of 2464 emigrants per 100.000 inhabitants (1913) is in reality much superior than at first seems, inasmuch as the phenomenon of immigration reflects nearly the entire mass of individuals economically active and not the totality of the population.

## 2. — The needs of agriculture and labour.

To the loss suffered through emigration must be added the *high percentage of labour required for cultivating the land.* Italy is eminently an agricultural country and moreover has but a scanty supply of those technical means which allow other countries more progressed a great saving of manual labour. Notwithstandig that much has been done during the last years to develop the use of machines in agriculture, there are still considerable extensions of Italian territory which for the want of capital and chiefly for the hilly and broken nature of the land may be said to know no other means of cultivation except manual labour. With a total superficies of *26 million hectares of cultivable ground*, Italy, before the war, importend only *43,000 agricultural machines a year*, including only 6,000 reapers and 1,000 sowers; while the national production was limited to 7 or 8 % of the quantity imported. Besides this, the agricultural fields are distant from the places of normal habitation, produced by the known phenomenon of *urbanism*, which is a characteristic conseguence of the malaria infesting the coastal plains, especially in the south of Italy,

and this distance appreciably increases the difficulties of agriculture as it requires for an equal amount of work a *greater loss of time* than in other countries.

### 3. — National demography and economy.

Nor is this all. There is another cause, which in Italy renders the contingent of men available for the colours less than in other countries, and it is the fact that, contrary to what happens in other countries, where a lower birth-rate produces a larger density of population at most productive age and maintains, comparatively speaking, the number of children not very high, in Italy, for many complex reasons, the *percentage of individuals enconomically active is considerably less than elsewhere.*

For example, the French population economically active exceeded before the war the corresponding aliquot of Italian population by 30 %. On the contrary the French population encomically passive was inferior by nearly 10 % of the corresponding aliquot of Italian population. What is the consequence resulting from this? It is that while in France every hundred persons economically active were burdened with only 46 passive individuals, *in Italy the same number were burdened with 67.*

## 4. — Large industries and the fuel crisis - The raw material problem.

This greater fragility of the economic mechanism is in Italy aggravated by the particular difficulties which the intense development of industries encounter.

The subsoil of the Peninsula has but *poor deposits of the principal raw materials* necessary for modern industries. It is known how greatly the *scarceness of fuel* tells on the entire procedure of Italian industrial life, from production to transport. Until 1913 the Kingdom was tributary to foreign countries for 11 million tons annually of fuel, disposing of a national production of little more than *one and a half million tons. From 300 to 400 million francs* went yearly abroad to ensure the working of the factories and railways indispensable for the economic existence of Italy. When the war broke out the need for fuel was redoubled, but the enormous increase in prices of fuel, added to the difficulty of transport, imposed instead the necessity of *limiting importation,* which is easily understood when we remember that in 1915, though about 1 million tons less were imported than the preceding year, Italy had to pay *370 million francs more.* In 1917, however, the importation was reduced to *less*

*than 5 million tons*, which is a quantity absolutely *insufficient to allow the country a free development of its productive faculties.*

To attenuate this deficiency every attempt was made to exploit as much as possible the hydraulic energies of the country. The Ansaldo Company alone drew from the Aosta Valley 200.000 H. P. At the same time the poor resources of the national subsoil were taxed. The active mines of lignite and bituminous scissel were increased from 65, the number before the war, to 230, so that the production which before 1915 represented 6 % of the imports reached, in 1917, 33 % of the imports. The production of peat also underwent a considerable increase, from 24,000 tons to 150,000 tons.

But the remedy not being naturally adequate to the need, the greatest economy was imposed. The *use of wood fuel* was extended on a large scale aggravating, *with the sacrifice of entire woods and also thousands of fruit trees*, a problem which was already painful for Italy — that of the *clearing of woodlands; heating in houses was almost done away with; the distribution of gas for domestic use was limited to 3 or 4 hours a day; a great number of trains*, even on the main lines, *were suspended. Private illumination was reduced while street lighting in the cities was almost entirely supressed.* All these restrictions

weighed heavily on the life of the nation, but they were accepted by the country with a magnificent display of patriotism.

With regard to iron, the question was momentarily less serious as the extraordinary needs of the war industries were met by the *exhaustion of the Italian mines*, which it is calculated will now be able to furnish material only for a few years more. The production of cast-iron and steel was in fact increased from *603 thousand to 942 thousand tons*, that of the minerals of manganese from *1.600 to 180.000 tons*, that of iron pyrites from *317.000 to 410.000 tons*, 146 thousand tons of this latter material being in 1916 exported to France. In 1914 there were only 6 manganese mines active but in 1916 this number was triplicated.

## 5. — The Mobilization of labour.

But the difficulties encountering the efforts of the Italian war industries were not limited only to raw materials. Not less serious was the *Labour Problem* as it was necessary to improvise workmen with the greatest rapidity possible from elements taken from all sides; a problem not easily understood in countries which have great industrial development as America and England. To facilitate, as much as possible, the formation of new industries a category

of « auxiliary » establishments was instituted, for the needs of which Industrial Mobilization Committees, under the control of the Ministry of Arms and Munitions, provided. These establishments which numbered 250 six months after Italy's entrance into the war, to-day amount to *1800*. From little more than 15 thousand workmen, a number of 700 *thousand working hands has been reached*. At the same time, establishments not « auxiliary » rose to the number of 2000. By adding to these some 50 military works a *total of 4000 establishments with 900 thousand workmen* has been reached.

## 6. — Italian Women and War Productions.

To gather such a large mass of operatives, *women workers* were utilized on the largest scale possible. While in May 1915, at the moment of Italy's entrance into the war but *a few thousand women hands* were employed in the war industries, at the end of the successive year the number was 98 thousand, at the end of 1917, 175 thousand and to-day it amounts to about 200 *thousand*. The number is modest in appearance, if compared to the effort carried out during the war by women in other countries, for example in England, where the official statistics can boast of numbers 10 or 11

times superior. However it must be remembered that, in the 200 thousand women workers, only those *employed in military establishments* (artillery works, pyrotechnic laboratories, fuze factories, etc.) or those belonging to « auxiliary » or other establishments producing only military material have been included, whereas, in the 2 or 3 million of women « working for the war » in the United Kingdom are comprised all women workers in general, from peasant girls, tram women, telephonists, servent maids and even women employed in piano factories, classes which also in Italy to-day are very vast. But as modest as it may be, the number of Italian women employed in the national war production *greatly surpasses that of exempt workmen* (172.000) or *of the military workmen* (151.000) taken singly: that is, it allows workmen with military obligations not to surpass in Italy much more than the number of *300.000*, whereas in other countries they are *half a million or more*. But, however, it is impossible not to recognize that the contribution given by woman labour to the war industries remains in Italy at a much lower level than that which it would reach, were it not for the *high fecundity of the Italian woman* which renders her less apt than the women of other countries to giving constant aid to the national production.

At the same time attempts were made to exploit conveniently the *work of individuals under age* by employing in the manufacture of arms and munitions *60 thousand boys*. The colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica furnished, on their part, from *2 to 4 thousand native labourers* who were distributed in the principal "auxiliary" establishments. Finally every effort was made to utilize in war industries *disabled soldiers* of whom several hundreds are already working in the shell factories.

### 7. — The improvisation of technical labour.

But the greatest problem was the rapid *professional education* of these occasional and improvised workmen. Attempts were made to resolve it by instituting special schools with rapid instruction courses. For the soldiers some were opened in Milan, Genoa, Turin, Rome, Naples, Modena and Palermo, which were frequented by the "unfit" of all classes and soldiers of the 1874 to 1877 classes (inclusive) available. The apprenticeship was from the beginning greatly shortened by the institution of *three daily turns of work each of eight hours*, so that, in the first period of the war, some schools, notwithstanding their scarcity of machinery, turned out *350 lathe turners*

*a month*, each having received 100 hours' instruction. Later on more care was taken to turn out better finished operatives and instruction courses of 300 and even 800 hours were begun. Thus, in a time relatively brief, the formation of a body of operatives was obtained and though their number was not excessive, they were at least skilled workmen and well chosen. Their production was still more increased, specially in the "auxiliary" establishments, by means of an opportune system of restrictions which succeeded, for example, in reducing the average number of absences from work.

## 8. — The fruits of the nation's efforts.

The result of this intense effort of creation and organization was that in a period of a few months *the italian production of small calibre shells*, for example, *had surpassed the needs of the operating army*. That of *medium and heavy calibre shells*, without reaching that point, is to-day *several score times more* than in the winter of 1915-16. With regard to *cannons*, from the 65 mm. mountain artillery to the 381 mm. guns, *more are manufactured in one day at the present time than in a month in 1915*. The Ansaldo Works alone produce *from 500 to 600 guns a month*. Completely new produc-

tions were instituted and others developed: from *medium and heavy trench mortars* to *aviation bombs*, from *machine-guns* of original Italian pattern to *engines* for motor-lorries, aeroplanes, airships, submarines; from *battery carriages* for 65, 75, 105, 149, 210, 260, 305, 381 mm. guns to limbers, carts, pontoons, shields, stretchers, *motor lorries and cars*, chasing and bombardment *aeroplanes*, photo-electric stations, field telephone wire, barbed wire. *Factories for explosives* grew in number and *to-day Italy possesses the largest in Europe*; the production of motor cars was so increased by erecting the *largest European establishment* of the kind at Turin as to permit furnishing the Allies; the activity of *shipyards* was intensified by the construction of *dreadnoughts*, *superdreadnoughts*, *submarines*, cargo boats, etc. Submarines were supplied even to England, United States, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal and Brasil. The largest Italian shipyard, the one at Sestri Ponente, occupies an area of 106,000 square metres and employs many thousand workmen.

### 9. — The limitation of supplies.

In a word, real miracles have been performed to bring, as quickly as possible and in spite of the obstacles to be overcome, the

Italian industries up to that level required by the importance of the military task to be carried out. And it was reached only at the price of an enormous and almost unproportional tension of nerves and muscles, thanks to an *effort undoubtedly superior to that imposed by the same necessities on other countries* better prepared to face them.

At the same time that the population was asked to work more, it was obliged not only *not to warm itself* and *stay in the dark* but also *to eat as little as possible.* As is known, *the wheat and corn production of Italy is not sufficient for the needs of the Peninsula.* Now the importation of grain *greatly diminished* during the war, descending to a quantity of 67 million cwt. a year. It was therefore necessary to establish a *severe rationing of bread* and a standard loaf of mixed flours, besides *prohibiting the sale of fresh bread.* At the same time *rice, sugar, oil, butter,* etc were also rationed. Even greater restrictions were imposed on the *consumption of meat,* which from the beginning of the war has been *reduced by 85 %* and more, *the use of meat being prohibited for six days a week and in some places for 28 or 29 days a month.*

In the plan of these arrangements the needs of the soldiers and working classes were of course not lost sight of, the former receiving

meat without restrictions and the latter higher rations of bread. But it should be remembered that the habitual thrift of the Italian people makes every new reduction in the supplies considerably felt, also for the fact that a *sufficient margin of food saved does not exist.* The scarceness of food and the high prices produced by speculation, which has been fought in vain by an active and willing supply policy, made the masses in Italy feel ever increasingly *the weight of these privations* and the abnormality of the situation caused by the war, and they found only in the tenacity of unconquerable patriotism and in the ardour of their sacred national aspirations — that patriotism and those aspirations which made the Italian masses voluntarily subscribe *ten and a half milliard francs in State Loans* while the national riches were only 90 milliards — the strength to persevere in the resistance and the struggle.

## 10. — Italy's military effort in itself.

Finally, thanks to the sacrifices made by the nation, the Italian Army itself, richly provided with arms and supported by the firm national faith, is in reality an an exponent of a *military effort considerably greater than that imposed by the war on other countries.*

In what does this military effort consist?

In Italy there are 26 *classes* fighting comprising men from the age of 44 years to 18 years (1874-1900). But to understaud the value of these figures it is necessary to remember that, at the beginning of the war on a total population of 34.671.000 souls, there were in the Kingdom only 8.931.000 men from 18 to 65 years old. Since May 1915 Italy has mobilized 5.182.000 *men*, sustaining up to the 1st June 1918 a loss of 1.254.000 *men in dead, prisoners and returned disabled* for wounds or injuries received in war.

*Three million and 928 thousand men* therefore compose the actual operating army (France, Italy and Balkans) and the reserves; which is as much as saying that the number of Italians mobilized at the present time constitutes 51.2 % of the present male population from 18 to 65 years old.

But this is not all. What is the intensity of the contribution required of the troops in the line?

*The Italian front has a horizontal development of 350 kilometres* but the fact that it runs for 315 kilometres along high mountain ground with considerable differences of elevation (*a height of 9000 feet is reached)* makes *its effective development ascend lo at least 500 kilometres*, whereas in the fronts of the other theatres of

war, which run generally in flat country, the effective development is little superior to the horizontal development. This brings about the necessity of keeping employed on the front line a larger quantity of troops, it diminishes the ordinary reserves at disposal and produces, as a consequence, a *greater daily consumption of men and material.*

## 11. — Conclusion.

From the information given above the following conclusions legitimately result:

1. — *That the effort which the Italian people are to-day sustaining for the war is not inferior to that of other belligerent countries,* and in some instances *surpasses it.*

2. — *That the effort imposed on the Italian combatants represents, under certain aspects, the maximum which can be sustained by an army in war.*

3. — *That the economic and military effort of Italy can hardly be more heavily taxed without jeopardizing the internal resistance of the country,* though due account be kept of the *profound patriotism and unbending will to win* of both the Italian people and their Army.

28th october 1918.